

**Testimony of Susan Lloyd Yolen, Vice President, Public Policy & Advocacy
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
February 16, 2017
Appropriations Committee Budget Hearing on the Department of Social Services**

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Susan Yolen, Vice President for Public Policy & Advocacy for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. PPSNE is the state's largest provider of family planning and reproductive health care, with 17 health centers across the state. We serve over 60,000 individuals a year, *half of whom come to us with Medicaid* as their source of coverage.

Planned Parenthood is concerned, as we have been over the years, about the plan to limit Medicaid coverage only to the parents of minor children up to 138 per cent of the poverty level...from 155 per cent in the very recent past. An estimated 9,500 people will be impacted by this change in the year ahead. A HUSKY family of four can only earn \$33,534 (from the prior limit of \$37,665) to remain covered as a family. While this change would not apply to children or pregnant women, our own state HUSKY data on the previous cut to this population, shows that four months after more than 17,000 parents lost HUSKY eligibility, only 16 percent had purchased commercial coverage through Access Health Connecticut, our state exchange. While another 39 percent were still covered by other programs under Medicaid, *the coverage status of the remaining 42 percent of the group was said to be unknown.*

But really—we know what happened to those parents. We know that 42% of that group, previously covered, is simply uninsured: 26,500 parents who no longer have protection from either mild or serious illness. Sure...their children may remain on HUKY, but research shows that families in which parents lack coverage don't routinely access necessary services for their kids. If you're not accustomed to getting good health care yourself, chances are you aren't bringing your kids either, whether they have coverage or not.

Advocates for coverage, for access to routine preventive care, and for insurance for those with pre-existing or chronic conditions, believe that good health and good health *care* are human rights. As Planned Parenthood, we consistently point to the benefits of investing in family planning as a means of saving public dollars. Likewise, by covering low income parents, and welcoming them into a health care setting...be it a federally qualified health center, a Planned Parenthood center, a health department or a private office...*we are betting that they'll use that open door to avoid costlier care in costlier settings.* Hospital emergency rooms are no place for someone with asthma or diabetes...someone who could easily be managed in a far less acute setting, at considerably less cost.

Some other aspects of the DSS budget simply make us sad. The annual adult dental cap is penny wise and pound foolish. Lowering personal care allowances for nursing home residents by \$10 a month seems ludicrous and desperate. Reducing the burial benefit for the indigent by \$300 is downright ghoulish. We hope that the long road ahead of this budget will provide the state with some creative ideas for how the state can maintain its status as a beacon of hope to the rest of the US.

Can we not lift up all of our citizens, especially those least able to afford the state standard of living in which we take pride, and guarantee health care for ALL? We ask that, in this budget year, you retain coverage of HUSKY parents at the current level. Thank you.